

Family Participation and Communication



Introduction

“Families are the primary influence in their children’s lives and also have strong beliefs and values regarding the education and care of their children, and the experiences in which their children should be able to participate. Effective relationships between educators and families are fundamental to the quality of education and care that children receive.” Adapted from the Guide to the National Quality Framework, ACECQA (2020)

Family participation at Kootingal and District Preschool is an important part of making the service a true part of the community and creating an environment that is welcoming and inclusive and supports a sense of belonging for children, families and educators.

Parent involvement in a child’s early childhood education results in quality learning and care, leading to better social, emotional and learning outcomes for children. Parents play an integral role in a child’s early childhood education and care. When educators create a welcoming, culturally safe, inclusive environment for everyone, the early education service becomes an integral part of the community.

Goals – What are we going to do?

Developing effective partnerships with families requires early education professionals to hold a set of values, skills, behaviours and knowledge that recognises and respects the central role of families in children’s lives. Every partnership will be unique, just as each family, with their different experiences, values and priorities, is unique.

Kootingal and District Preschool encourages open communication through the enrolment and orientation process, policy review, feedback forms, the Parent Committee, the daily program, documentation, formal and informal meetings, emails, and conversations. Our service values the input of families, educators, and the wider community to help create service that meets the needs of the children who attend the service. The education and care service has an open-door policy for families.

Strategies – To achieve our goals

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Authority/Responsibility For
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Ensure that educators provide information to families regarding the content and operation of the educational program, in relation to their child and that a copy of the educational program is available for inspection at the education and care service.➤ Ensure that families have access to documents regarding the assessment of the child’s developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program and assessments of the child’s progress against the outcomes of the educational program.➤ Ensure that parents are notified of any incident, injury, trauma or illness that occurs for their child while at the education and care service.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that administrative spaces are adequate for the purpose of consulting with parents and for conducting private conversations. ➤ Ensure that parents are notified of changes to policies or fees and given adequate notice as per the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations</i>. ➤ Ensure that a copy of the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations</i> is available for parents to access. ➤ Ensure that the enrolment and orientation process provide families with information about the philosophy, policies and practices of Kootingal and District Preschool prior to children’s first attendance at the service. ➤ Establish a committee to encourage family involvement in the education and care service. The committee will elect representatives to oversee and chair meetings. Each committee meeting will have an agenda and all families will be invited to participate in the meeting once a term. Committee attendees will have input into the continuing improvements within the centre. A committee representative will assist with staff recruitment, family activities, encourage community partnerships and service events. A staff representative will attend each meeting.
Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop systems for families to provide feedback regarding the enrolment and orientation process and when reviewing policies and procedures to improve processes and practice. ➤ Ensure that parents may enter the education and care services at any time unless such entry would pose a risk to the safety of children/educators or breach court orders regarding access to children. ➤ Inform families about the processes for providing feedback and making complaints. ➤ Develop an enrolment and orientation procedures that ensures families are provided with information about the philosophy, policies and practices of the education and care services prior to children’s first attendance at the service.
Early Childhood Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Demonstrate respect in their relationships with families, adopting an open, nonjudgemental and honest approach that is responsive to a family’s situation. ➤ Understand that consensus with families is not always possible or desirable. ➤ Create a welcoming, culturally safe environment where all families are encouraged to participate in and contribute to experiences that enhance children’s learning and development. ➤ Actively listen to each family’s understandings, priorities, aspirations, and perspectives about their child and be authentic and genuinely interested. This will lead to informed, shared decision-making and the promotion of each child’s learning and development. ➤ Actively engage families and children in planning for ongoing learning and development in the service, at home, and in the local community. ➤ Establish partnerships where information sharing supports families’ role as the child’s first teacher. ➤ Inform families about the processes for providing feedback and making complaints. ➤ Be available for families at pick up and drop off times to pass on important messages and information about their child’s participation in the education and care program.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage families to be involved in the Education and Care service and the program through feedback, visiting the service, bringing in items from the home environment and giving feedback on children’s emerging interests and needs. ➤ Promote continuous open and honest two-way communication with families to assist them to feel connected with their children’s experiences in the Education and Care setting and to develop families’ trust and confidence in the Education and Care service. ➤ Value parents as the first and most important educator in their child’s life, seeking to share the parent’s understandings, knowledge and preferences for their child and seeking to balance individual needs with practice in the Education and Care service. ➤ Recognise that because families, and parents in particular, are often busy with many competing priorities, they will need to consider a range of strategies to build and maintain relationships with each family. ➤ Make documentation available to families and prepare documentation in a way that is readily understandable to the carers of the child and to other educators. ➤ Ensure that parents are notified immediately but no later than 24 hours of any incident, injury, trauma or illness that occurs for their child while at the education and care service.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide accurate information on enrolment and medical information forms during the enrolment process and notify educators when any information changes. ➤ Be invited to contribute to the quality improvement process within the Education and Care service. ➤ Be encouraged to attend children’s excursions to help meet required ratios and to support their children’s knowledge of and engagement in their community. ➤ Be invited to assist with working bees in the education and care service. These will be arranged from time to time to help maintain equipment and the education and care environment and will be a family event where children can also participate. ➤ Be invited to family events to be held periodically to help families network and develop friendships in the local community. Educators will be encouraged to attend these events. ➤ Notify educators of any changes to their child’s home life or health that may impact the child’s ability to function at the service.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

Management and staff will monitor and review the effectiveness of the Family Participation and Communication Policy regularly. Updated information will be incorporated as needed.

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this policy every 12 months.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with Regulation 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Families feel valued and welcomed as the first and most important educator in their child's life. Continuous improvement in the education and care setting is occurring because collaboration, clear communication, reflection, constructive feedback, and positive relationships are fostered between all participants.

Links to other policies:

Interactions with Children

Excursion/Preschool Programs and Events

Code of Conduct for Staff Members

Complaints and Feedback

Enrolment and Orientation

Incidents, Injury Trauma and Illness.

Record Keeping

Related Legislation:

NQS

Quality Area 1		Educational program and practice
Standard	1.1	Program
Standard	1.3	Assessment and planning
Element	1.3.3	Information for families
Quality Area 2		Children's health and safety
Standard	2.1	Health
Element	2.1.2	Health practices and procedures
Standard	2.2	Safety
Element	2.2.2	Incident and emergency management
Quality Area 3		Physical environment
Standard	3.1	Design
Quality Area 6		Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
Standard	6.1	Supportive relationships with families
Element	6.1.1	Engagement with the service
Element	6.1.2	Parents views are respected
Standard	6.2	Collaborative partnerships
Element	6.2.1	Transitions
Quality Area 7		Governance and leadership
Standard	7.1	Governance

National Regulations

Reg	75	Information about educational program to be kept available
Reg	76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
Reg	86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness

Reg	111	Administrative space
Reg	157	Access for parents
Reg	168	Education and care must have policies and procedures
Reg	172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
Reg	185	Law and regulations to be available

Sources:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: Belonging, Being and Becoming, V2.0 2022
- Guide to the National Quality Standard (3) ACECQA (2018)
- Raising Children Network – Involving parents in school and childcare - http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/involving_parents_in_school_and_childcare.html

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